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February 11, 2022

New England Commission of Higher Education
3 Burlington Woods Drive, Suite 100
Burlington, MA 01803-4514

Members of the New England Commission of Higher Education:

As chair of the Board of Directors of the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC), I write to you today to express our support for the proposal to merge the state's twelve community colleges into a single accredited institution as CT State Community College (CT State). A single merged college will help students and institutions across the state by providing broader access to post-secondary training and improved transferability.

CCIC is the association that represents fifteen accredited nonprofit independent colleges and universities in Connecticut. CCIC serves its member institutions through government relations, public policy development, research analysis, communications and coordinated member services. The presidents of each member institution compose the CCIC Board. CCIC institutions have been strong partners the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) system in meeting the needs of Connecticut's students.

Albertus Magnus College

Connecticut College

Fairfield University

Goodwin University

Mitchell College

Quinnipiac University

Rensselaer at Hartford

Sacred Heart University

Trinity College

University of Bridgeport

University of Hartford

University of New Haven

University of Saint Joseph

Wesleyan University

Yale University

CCIC partnered with CSCU to launch the Independent College Transfer Guarantee in the fall of 2021. The Guarantee seeks to make transferring to a four-year independent college simpler, by ensuring acceptance at a participating independent nonprofit four-year institution for students graduating from a community college with an associate degree with a minimum GPA. The Guarantee promotes equity, opportunity and access in higher education. A singly accredited community college with a single course catalogue should allow the Guarantee to grow further by simplifying the process for students and institutions.

The community colleges are a key partner for CCIC institutions in helping to meet the state's workforce and economic development goals, working in close coordination with the Governor's Workforce Council, the Office of Workforce Strategy, and the Department of Economic and Community Development. With the three regional workforce officers in place, we have already seen the benefits of the merger in

improved coordination amongst the colleges and CCIC institutions as they partner on state and federal grants to bring more education and training resources to our communities.

On behalf of the CCIC institutions, we support the creation of CT State Community College as a means to build a strong higher education ecosystem in our state and urge the Commission's endorsement of the substantive change proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rhona Free". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Rhona" being more prominent than the last name "Free".

Rhona Free
President, University of Saint Joseph and
Chair of the Board of Directors, CCIC